

Carolina, said of him, "What many of you don't know is that Dirk was a patriot in the truest sense of the word."

He noted Dirk's six deployments—four to Afghanistan, and one each to Somalia and Kuwait—and the numerous awards, such as the Bronze Star.

Lt. Colonel Clifford told the audience, "It takes just plain guts. We wonder where you find such young men. Corbin, Kentucky is that place."

Along with giving thanks to Dirk's parents, the officer singled out Dirk's widow, Maria Shelton—who also serves in the military and is stationed at Fort Bragg.

"Maria, thanks for standing by Dirk during those long trips" (that he made to serve his country during combat tours and numerous overseas missions).

The military was there in a show of strength and support.

RECOGNIZING THE THOMAS MORE COLLEGE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to a team of national champions that comes from the great State of Kentucky. On March 21, 2015, the Thomas More College women's basketball team, the Saints, won the first ever team championship in their school's history.

The Saints notched an 83-to-63 win over George Fox University in the women's Division III championship game and capped an undefeated season with a record of 33 to 0. They are only the sixth team in the history of Division III women's basketball to go an entire season undefeated. Along the way to their perfect season, they defeated four top 10-ranked teams.

The final game was hosted by Calvin College in Grand Rapids, MI, and played in the Van Noord Arena. Thomas More jumped out to an early lead and never trailed in the game. Thomas More's leading scorer in the championship game, Sydney Moss, was also named the NCAA Division III national player of the year by both D3hoops.com and the Women's DIII News. It is the second consecutive year she has earned the award. During the NCAA postseason, Moss broke the NCAA all-division men's and women's scoring record with an incredible 197 points in the Saints' six NCAA tournament games.

Saints head coach Jeff Hans, who guided his team to their first undefeated season and their first national championship, was also named the Division III national coach of the year by both D3hoops.com and the Women's DIII News.

I want to recognize every member of this championship team that is bringing the Women's Division III trophy back to Kentucky. Team members include Kirsten Paul, Kiley Bartels, Abby Owings, Stephanie Krusling, Olivia Huber, Nikki Kiernan, Mikkah Hignite, Sarah Roaden, Kelly McDonald, Sydney Wainscott, Alexa Santamaria, Kaylee Bush, Sydney Moss, Sam Cady, and Hannah Devine. Jeff Hans is the head coach, and he is assisted by Tim

Shields, Tanja Speaker, and Jerry Allen. The school's director of athletics is Terry Connor and its president is David Armstrong.

The Kentucky Enquirer recently published an article about the Saints' victory. I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Kentucky Enquirer, March 21, 2015]

THOMAS MORE WOMEN WIN DIVISION III NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP (By Adam Turer)

GRAND RAPIDS.—The Division III women's college basketball season began with Mount St. Joseph's Lauren Hill scoring the season's first points in front of a sold crowd at the Cintas Center. It ended with head coach Jeff Hans and the Thomas More Saints hoisting the national championship trophy. With an 83-63 win over George Fox on Saturday night, the Saints earned the first team championship in Thomas More history.

In a battle of 32-0 teams—the first Division III women's championship between two undefeated squads—the Saints controlled from the opening tip. One night after starting 0-7 from the field, Thomas More hit its first three shots to open up an early lead. They never trailed.

George Fox, the 2009 national champion and 2012 runner-up, made it this far behind its relentless full court press. The Saints had faced very little full court pressure this season, for good reason. With Abby Owings, Sydney Moss, and Sydney Wainscott all able to handle point guard duties, the Saints are nearly impossible to trap. Hans went to a four-guard lineup at times with Olivia Huber coming off the bench. The Saints still had to overcome several uncharacteristic turnovers, but balanced those miscues with a bounty of fast break points.

Moss was, as always, the focal point of the opposing defense. It took the nation's leading scorer over 11 minutes to make her first field goal. The two-time national player of the year found other ways to help her team win. She led Thomas More with 19 points, 15 rebounds and 11 assists. The biggest beneficiaries of her defense-breaking ball handling were post players Alexa Santamaria and Nikki Kiernan. Santamaria finished with 14 points on 6-6 shooting, while Kiernan added 16 points on 7-11 shooting. Most of their attempts were wide open looks from within two feet thanks to Moss drawing away helpside defenders and dropping no-look dimes.

The victory was a culmination for the program which began its ascension as a national contender under current Xavier head coach Brian Neal. The success continued under Hans, but the Saints developed a pattern of overwhelming in the postseason. The addition of key transfers and the infusion of several of northern Kentucky's top high school players elevated this year's team to unforeseen heights. Moss did not transfer home from Florida expecting to win a national championship. She drew inspiration from the program's family atmosphere, and the ability to play in front of her family nearly every night. This win brought renewed appreciation for her loved ones.

"You look up and see your mom and think of all the practices she drove you to, all the shoes she bought you, and all the sacrifices she made," Moss said after Friday's semifinal win.

Dozens of Saints students, many athletes in other sports, made the trek to Grand Rap-

ids not once, but twice this weekend. They bussed up for Friday's semifinal, back to Crestview Hills, then back up on Saturday. Thomas More fans accounted for roughly 70 percent of the crowd and 90 percent of the crowd noise at Saturday's title game. The team bus will return to Crestview Hills with some new hardware to add to the Connor Convocation Center trophy case.

"The support I cannot say enough about. The pride that they have in their school and excitement to see our programs go to another level," said athletic director Terry Connor. "[There is] a great sense of pride and this is proof that it can be done."

RECOGNIZING THE OWENSBORO HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' BASKETBALL TEAM

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, basketball is very important to us in my home State of Kentucky, and that is why I am so honored and pleased to recognize the winners of the Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA) State Basketball Championship for boys. The Owensboro Red Devils won a decisive 74-58 game over rival Bowling Green this March 22.

It is the fourth State championship for Owensboro High School, and the first since 1980 for the Red Devils. Owensboro came into the tournament having shot 55 percent from the field during the first three rounds of the tournament. During the championship game, they never trailed.

Owensboro is only the seventh school in State history to win the championship four times. And Owensboro's head coach, Rod Drake, was a senior on the Owensboro 1980 championship team. A crowd of over 11,000 saw Owensboro clinch the win inside of Lexington's legendary Rupp Arena.

I want to recognize every member of this championship team that is bringing the KHSAA trophy back to Owensboro. Team members include Darius Brown, Deonte Douglas, Gabe Fillman, Jacoby Harris, Aric Holman, James Howard, Darion Marrow, Justin Miller, Ishawn Murphy, Shawn Pendleton, Airius Phillips, Dylan Sanford, Trevor Washington, and Rashai Wimsatt. Matthew Cook and Seth Garrard are student managers. Rod Drake is the head coach and he is assisted by Chad Embry, Zach Erwin, Scott Hogg, and David Phillips.

The Lexington Herald-Leader recently published an article about the Red Devils' victory. I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Herald-Leader, March 22, 2015]

OWENSBORO BOYS WIN THEIR FIRST STATE BASKETBALL TITLE SINCE 1980

(By Mark Maloney)

It was a long time coming, but Owensboro finally snatched its fourth state championship Sunday.

The Red Devils led wire-to-wire in downing Bowling Green 74-58 in the finals of the 98th Whitaker Bank/KHSAA Sweet Sixteen in Rupp Arena.

Owensboro, playing in its record 43rd State tournament, also won in 1949, '72 and '80.

Dylan Sanford led a balanced scoring attack with 21 points, hitting all four of the Red Devils' three-pointers.

"My teammates got me the ball right where I needed it," said Sanford, a 6-foot-1 senior. "Everybody knows I'm a shooter, and they got me the ball in the pocket and I hit some shots."

Then there was the inside tandem of senior big fellas Aric Holman and tourney MVP Justin Miller.

"He dominates," Coach Rod Drake said of Holman. "He gets there, and he changed the game."

Holman, a 6-9, 185-pounder, netted 20 points, 14 rebounds and eight blocks.

"It feels amazing," Holman said. "Especially when you work your butt off, you and your teammates. You do everything together, and when you work as hard as we do, we knew what our goal was. And we're just glad we accomplished it before we left."

Miller, a 6-7, 290-pounder, played through what he called a groin/hamstring injury and finished with 11 points, 10 rebounds and five assists.

"I was about 30 percent, honestly," Miller said. "But I wasn't going to let that stop me from playing my last game with my brothers, so I'm just glad we got it done."

Jacoby Harris, a 5-10 sophomore, added 14 points and five assists as the 3rd Region team won its seventh game in a row.

The Red Devils (31-4) beat Bowling Green twice during the regular season—79-71 on Jan. 3 and 69-66 on Feb. 10. But that didn't make them overconfident.

"To be honest, we had a little doubt," Holman said. "Because to beat a team three times in a row is pretty hard. So we just took it as we never played them before. . . . Took it back to square one, and that's how we got here now."

This marked the first finals between Western Kentucky schools since 4th Region Edmonson County beat 2nd Region Christian County in 1976.

Fourth Region champion Bowling Green (31-6), in its first State finals and 15th tourney, was led by Terry Taylor with 16 points and nine rebounds. Tucker Sine had nine points and seven boards, and Kyran Jones netted eight points and eight caroms.

"Coming into this tournament, we were playing as well as anybody," Purples Coach D.G. Sherrill said. "And in this championship game, we just kind of ran into a buzz saw. We ran into a team that shot a little better, they fought around the rim a little harder, they hit their free throws (20 of 23), and it was just a tough game for us. But we got beat by a bunch of good players and a great coaching staff over in Owensboro."

Owensboro jumped to a 4-0 lead to start.

Ahead 4-3, the Red Devils went on a 9-0 run, only to see the Purples come back with a 9-0 rally to leave the score 13-12.

Owensboro led 16-12 through one quarter and 27-23 at halftime.

The Devils opened the third quarter with a 7-1 run to push the lead to 34-24.

Then, a 9-0 blitz widened the gap to 43-26.

Holman started the action by converting a three-point play for a 37-26 lead.

Darion Marrow, who finished with six points, hit a short jumper.

Sanford scored on a fast break, and Marrow flipped in a shot from the lane.

The lead was 49-33 through three quarters. The closest Bowling Green came from there was 61-49 with 3:06 left, when Taylor scored on a put-back.

Both teams came into the finals having shot 55 percent from the field during the first three rounds of the tourney.

Owensboro nearly matched that Sunday, going 25 of 48 (52.1 percent), but Bowling Green came in 23 of 64 (35.9 percent).

"Defensively, it's all about heart," Sanford said. "And our team has a lot of heart."

"The basket got a little small for us tonight," Sherrill said. "We picked a bad game to have one of our lower performances in the shooting from the field. But to come in here and play in a state championship time for the first time in Bowling Green history . . . I'm still so proud of them. We're taking home a big old silver ball tonight. That means we accomplished something up here."

RECOGNIZING THE COVINGTON HOLY CROSS GIRLS' BASKETBALL TEAM

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I believe my U.S. Senate colleagues are well aware of how seriously we take our basketball in my home State of Kentucky. I rise to congratulate the statewide champions in girls' basketball in Kentucky, the Covington Holy Cross Indians, who won the Kentucky High School Athletic Association, KHSAA, State Basketball Championship this March 15.

It was a dramatic ending to a spectacular season for the Indians, who finish with a 33-to-3 record. The score in the final game against the Allen County-Scottsville Patriots was tied at 32 with just under 20 seconds to play when senior forward Abby Hassert, who had not scored all game, drove the lane from the top of the key to score a layup and win the game. It was the Indians' first appearance in the State tournament in 39 years, and the game was enjoyed by over 5,000 fans at E.A. Diddle Arena in Bowling Green, KY.

I want to recognize every member of this championship team that is bringing the KHSAA trophy to Covington. Team members include Justice Arce, Zyah Beal, Olivia Crigler, Kate Dreas, Morgan Gabbard, Abby Hassert, Ally Mayhaus, Cessie Mayhaus, Dajah McClendon, Candace McNama, Tara Niehaus, Hannah Niemeyer, Alexis Riep, Aleah Tucker, Courtney Turner, and Deja Turner. The coach is Kes Murphy.

The Lexington Herald-Leader recently published an article about the Indians' victory. I ask unanimous consent that it be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Lexington Herald-Leader, Mar. 15, 2015]

GIRLS' SWEET SIXTEEN: COVINGTON HOLY CROSS TAKES STATE TITLE (By Mark Maloney)

BOWLING GREEN.—Abby Hassert picked a fine time for her only points of the game Sunday.

Hassert drove down the lane and put in the winning basket, plus a free throw, with 5.5 seconds left to vault Covington Holy Cross to a 35-32 victory over Allen County-Scottsville in the Houchens Industries/KHSAA Girls' Sweet Sixteen championship game.

"I knew I had to do something," said Hassert, a 5-foot-10 senior. "I knew that we had to get the ball to somebody to score and I saw the lane wide open, and I knew I had to take it."

An E.A. Diddle Arena crowd of 5,335 roared.

After multiple timeouts, Allen County-Scottsville had a last shot to tie. But Morgan Rich's long three-point try from near her team bench hit off the backboard and rim.

"We got exactly what we wanted," Patriots Coach Brad Bonds said. "We got Morgan in the right spot for the shot. We threw it up to Savannah (Gregory), who threw it to Morgan. It was perfect. It was executed great. We got the shot we wanted."

Holy Cross (33-3), out of the 9th Region, ended the season on a 22-game winning streak.

The Indians, with a school enrollment of 406, also won the All "A" title back on Feb. 1. They are the fourth team ever to sweep the KHSAA and All "A" titles in the same season, joining Nicholas County (1993), Hazard (1997) and Lexington Christian (2007).

"It doesn't matter the size. It really doesn't matter the size," said Deja Turner, who led Holy Cross with 13 points and five rebounds, and who was named tourney MVP. "We came in here against some big, big teams. We knocked off some very big teams, and we came through and we pulled it out twice."

Ally Mayhaus added 10 points for the winners.

Holy Cross also beat the Patriots on Dec. 22, 61-54 in Lexington.

In the Sweet Sixteen, Holy Cross opened with a 51-33 win over Bell County, then edged top-rated Elizabethtown 41-40. In the semifinals, the Indians beat Male 47-37.

Allen County-Scottsville (30-5), the 4th Region champion, had an eight-game winning streak snapped.

"Bottom line, they made a big-time play. A big-time play," Bonds said. "And that's what the State Tournament's all about is kids and very high-quality basketball teams going at it, and unfortunately we came out on the short end of the stick. But a lot of credit to them. I thought it was two outstanding basketball teams battling on both ends."

Rich, a 5-foot-10 University of Kentucky recruit, led all scorers with 20 points. She also had three rebounds and two assists.

Gregory was the next-highest ACS scorer with five. She and Holly Robinson grabbed seven rebounds each.

Holy Cross Coach Kes Murphy, whose sister Donna was Kentucky's first Miss Basketball in 1976, credited the championship to a killer schedule that had his team well prepared for Sunday.

The game was tied 18-18 at halftime, with ACS holding a 12-3 advantage in rebounds. Robinson has six of those.

But Holy Cross had a 9-0 edge in points off turnovers.

The Indians led 27-24 through three quarters.

In a game that saw seven ties and six lead changes, the Patriots took their final lead, 32-31, when Rich hit two of three free throws with 2:29 left.

A Mayhaus free throw at 1:09 tied the score.

With the Patriots patiently looking for a game-winning shot, Holy Cross point guard Dajah McClendon picked Rich's pocket with 32 seconds left.

"I just knew I had to get up and get one for my team," McClendon said. "We needed that."

Holy Cross took a timeout at 19.6, which led to Hassert's game-winning play.

"She'd better make it," Murphy said he thought at the time of the drive. "And you know what, she's not an offensive player. For what we need. But we know she can play, we know she can make passes and for her to finish and give us this, it means everything."